KANGAROOS from nowhere

Two Chicago policemen know these mysterious marsupials are real and that they pack a mean punch.

By David Fideler and Loren Coleman

WHEN AN incredulous homeowner reported he had seen a kangaroo cavorting on his porch during the early morning hours of October 18, 1974, Chicago policemen Leonard Ciagi and Michael Byrne had not exactly taken him seriously. But now, two hours later, as they faced the five-foot marsupial at the end of the dark alley, they changed their minds — the creature was showing absolutely no interest in being captured. Ciagi and Byrne didn't like the way the thing was growling at them and it obviously didn't like the way they were trying to handcuff it.

In fact, the moment they attempted to approach, it "started to scream and get vicious," Byrne would tell a reporter later. My partner got kicked pretty bad in the legs. He (the kangaroo) smacks pretty good but we got in a few punches to the head and he must have felt it."

Byrne added ruefully, "Too bad we didn't have our nightsticks there. Then we could have really hammered him."

Short of shooting the animal, which they did not want to do, the officers stood little chance of subduing it. So, battered and bruised, the pair retreated and sadly watched the kangaroo bounce away as other squad cars arrived on the scene. The kangaroo hopped over a fence and was last seen tearing down the street at about 20 miles an hour.

All that remained was the derision of the nation's newspapers which the next day chronicled the episode under such headlines as "KANGAROO STAYS A JUMP AHEAD OF THE POLICE" and "KEYSTONE KOPS ON KANGAROO KAPER." No one seemed to realize that the curious experience the hapless officers had undergone was far from unique. Chicago — and many other places across the United States — had hosted phantom kangaroos before.

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THE FIRST known Chicago area sighting had taken place three years earlier when a campus policeman spotted a kangaroo on the Northwestern University grounds in suburban Evanston. The astonished officer immediately notified the Evanston police but by the time they got there the creature was gone.

But it took Ciagi and Byrne's close encounter to alert Chicagoans to the presence of kangaroos in their midst. Within hours of the policemen's sighting other northwest side residents, particularly those living along Belmont and Oak Park Streets, were stunned to

Map shows location of phantom kangaroo sightings. They have occurred all over the country with the heaviest concentration of reports in Illinois.

see a 4½-foot-tall kangaroo nonchalantly hopping down the street.

At seven o'clock the next morning newsboy Kenneth Grieshamer, standing on the corner of Sunnyside and Mulligan Streets, heard what he thought was the screech of brakes. Spinning around, Grieshamer saw not a car but a kangaroo. It was standing a few feet away. "He looked at me, I looked at him, and then away he hopped," the boy said.

An hour later two boys near Austin Avenue and Eastwood Road saw a kangaroo. Early that same evening someone called the Chicago police to report a kangaroo hopping around Belmont and Mango Avenue. Apparently the kangaroo developed quite an appetite with all this activity because the next morning the Chicago police switchboard logged calls from startled residents who claimed the creature was rummaging through their garbage cans.

On Wednesday, October 23, after a kangaroo was seen roaming around Schiller Woods near Irving Park Road, the mystery marsupial temporarily abandoned Chicago for greener pastures — such as those in Plano, Ill., 50 miles west.

John Orr, an off-duty Plano policeman, spotted a kangaroo Friday eve-

ning, October 25, while driving on Riverview Road just outside the city limits. The animal leaped eight feet from a cornfield, landed in the middle of the road and loomed in Orr's headlights.

"If I hadn't slowed down," Orr related, "I would have hit him. My cousin was in the car behind me and when she saw him she just plain ran off the road."

Orr told reporters that the kangaroo stood in the road for a few seconds and then hopped off into a wooded area.

Until Orr's sighting it had not occurred to anyone that more than one kangaroo might be on the loose. But the Plano report added a puzzling new element to the mystery. Things got even more complicated a little more than a week later, on November 2, when *kangaroos showed up in Chicago and Plano at roughly the same time.*

Jerry Wagner, Steve Morton and Shawne Clark — all 17 — were driving along Plano's Shafer Road around nine o'clock that night. Suddenly the car's headlights shone on — you guessed it. . . .

"We almost ran over it," Wagner said. "It jumped onto the road about 20 feet ahead of us. I was on the passenger side in the front seat and I pointed it out to Shawne and Steve and all three of us saw it.

"It landed on the road near the intersection with the main road and there was no traffic. It sat up on its haunches as kangaroos do and then jumped over a fence about five feet high and disappeared into the woods."

While the youths were telling their story in the Kendall County sheriff's office, a Chicago couple were walking along the 5600 block of South New England Avenue. When they first spotted it, Cathy Battaglia, 17, and her boy friend Len Zeglicz, 19, thought it was a dog. But when the animal looked at them, turned around and hopped away, they realized they had just seen the city's most celebrated new resident.

What makes these events doubly incredible is that kangaroos can travel no more than 25 miles an hour (and then only for short distances). The Chicago sighting took place half an hour after the one at Plano, which means that if only one kangaroo were involved it would have had to traverse 50 miles between appearances. That seems unlikely if not downright impossible. It also seems unlikely that *two* kangaroos were responsible — but if we assume the alleged witnesses were telling the truth, what other explanation is there? In fact, the other sightings of November 1974 make more than one kangaroo an almost inescapable conclusion.

On the morning of November 3 Frank Kocherver, 21, saw a kangaroo near a forest preserve on Chicago's northwest side. Kocherver reported he saw the animal leap from a two-legged position and bound into the woods.

Then on Monday, November 4, a truck driver near Plano saw a deer in the company of a creature he could not immediately identify. He pulled his rig over to the side of the road and tracked the deer and "another animal that definitely is not a deer — its prints in the mud of the field are different and I think it is a kangaroo."

Then the kangaroos *really* started to multiply.

According to the *Wall Street Journal,* on November 6 a truck driver in the Lansing, Ill., area was forced to swerve off the road in order to avoid hitting one of the maverick marsupials.

Six days later Rensselaer, Ind., was subjected to a brief kangaroo flap. It started at 8:30 A.M. when Alfred Hentschel, an employee of St. Joseph's College, saw one of the bounding phantoms come out of a cornfield near a drug store on Rensselaer's south edge. From there the kangaroo hopped down Charles Street, then crossed over into another cornfield. When Hentschel last saw it the animal was hopping west toward some trees on the distant edge of another cornfield. The sighting touched off a massive search but no trace of the animal was found.

"I hope some farmer or somebody else sees it or everybody'll think I'm a nut," said Hentschel. "But it was a kangaroo . . . I know it was." Hentschel didn't have long to wait because later that day two other persons spotted the creature in separate sightings.

On November 15 the kangaroo — or *a* kangaroo — was back in Chicago. Joe Bernotus was taking a train to work that Friday morning when he saw the creature through the vehicle's window.

"I'm sure that somebody else must have seen it because I was in an eight-car train," he said. "But when people see something like that they don't always want to say anything."

Bernotus reported that the animal was five feet tall and "black all over, except for the stomach and face which were brown." The kangaroo was standing in a vacant lot near Damen Avenue and Montrose Street.

On Sunday, November 17, a mystery kangaroo appeared in Carmel, Ind., north of Indianapolis. Amos Miller, his wife and another couple spotted the animal while driving to church that morning. The kangaroo was seen sitting on its haunches near the Cool Creek Bridge at Indiana 234 and Keystone. Later that afternoon police received a call from a woman who had seen the marsupial hop off into a wooded area.

"We don't doubt the story one bit," a police spokesman said. But officials never did catch up with the creature.

The last sighting of 1974 took place on November 25 near Sheridan, Ind.

Donald Johnson, a Sheridan farmer, was driving his pickup truck down a deserted rural road when he encountered the creature. As he slowed down at the intersection he looked to his right and saw a kangaroo "running on all four feet down the middle of the road." The animal spotted Johnson, jumped over a four-foot barbed wire fence and bounded across a field.

But such events, bizarre and unlikely as they might be, are really nothing new. They have been going on for a long time — since at least the turn of the century.

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THE FIRST known account of an errant kangaroo in America appears in an obscure book by Robert H. Gollmar, *My Father Owned a Circus.* In a chapter on the tragedies that afflicted the Gollmar circus, the author describes a tornado that swept through New Richmond, Wis., on June 12, 1899, when the circus was in town. The next year local historian Ann P.

Epley wrote that in the midst of the storm a Mrs. Glover saw a kangaroo running through a neighbor's backyard. She assumed it was an escaped circus animal but Gollmar disputes this. "I have no recollection of the circus owning a kangaroo," he says. "I particularly doubt it in 1899."

This would not be the first time an errant kangaroo would be "explained" — mistakenly — as a circus animal.

When Amanda Sutts of Mays Landing, N.J., saw a kangaroo one evening in 1900 she thought it was the "Jersey Devil," a legendary creature from the state's folk history.

"We heard a scream near the barn one night and ran out of our house," she recalled years later. "We saw this thing that looked like a kangaroo. It wasn't such a great big animal — it was about the size of a small calf and weighed about 150 pounds. But the noise is what scared us. It sounded like a woman screaming in an awful lot of agony."

Mrs. Sutts said that she saw the "Devil's" tracks many times, always around the family barn. She remembered that the footprints were from eight to 10 feet apart and led to a large cedar swamp at the rear of the barn.

But the majority of kangaroo sightings in the United States have taken place in comparatively recent years. For example, in January 1949 bus driver Louis Staub claimed to have seen a phantom marsupial in his headlights just outside Grove City, Ohio.

"It's about 5½ feet high, hairy and brownish in color," he said. "It has a long pointed head. It leaped a barbed wire fence and disappeared. It resembled a kangaroo but it appeared to jump on all fours. I'm certain it wasn't a deer."

For a 10-year period between 1957 and 1967 the woods around Coon Rapids, Minn., hosted many mystery kangaroos. The first persons to see them were Barbara Battmer's two sons, then seven and nine, who swore — and stick to their story to this day — that they observed two kangaroos hopping together through the woods. The five-foot-tall animals hopped out of a grove of trees, crossed a small clearing about 50 feet in front of the boys and disappeared into another wooded area. This clear view of the creatures showed their color to be a blending of light tan and medium brown.

Linda Brodie says she is certain that in 1958 she saw a kangaroo in the area. Mrs. Gary Haider reports that her two brothers came home one day that same year to tell of a "*big* rabbit" — as tall as they were — hopping through the trees. Mr. and Mrs. Willard L. Hays of Coon Rapids testify that they saw two hugely oversized "bunnies" on the evening of April 24, 1967. Hazel Hays told Loren Coleman that the kangaroos were in an open area approximately one mile west of Highway 47, near the Anoka County Fairgrounds.

In 1968 mystery marsupials turned up in Michigan and Ohio. On May 31 a motorist traveling along Ohio Route 63 reported to the Ohio State Patrol that he had seen a kangaroo near Monroe at 2:30 A.M. The radio dispatcher took the report lightly but ordered Patrolman James Patrick to the scene. Patrick reported back within a matter of minutes.

"The thing hopped right across the road in front of my cruiser," Patrick said. "It sure looked like a kangaroo to me." It was last seen heading in the direction of Lebanon, Ohio.

Meanwhile Cincinnati Zoo Director Ed Maruska was telling reporters, "I doubt there's a kangaroo around here on the loose. We had a kangaroo story about two years ago. Never found one. Down the years we've chased after reported black leopards, panthers and even a polar bear." Anyway, Maruska smirked, "Anyone seeing the kangaroo, which I doubt exists, should try to keep it in sight and call the Zoo."

Keeping it in sight, however, would have involved a wait of several months and a trip to Lansing, Mich., where on August 3 a citizen reported to state police that he had seen a kangaroo hopping around the campus of Michigan State University near College and Jolly Roads.

The weirdest kangaroo report of all comes not from the United States but from Ireland and adds a whole new dimension to the riddle. It suggests that even that country's fabled lake monsters may have been infected with kangaroo-itis — at least if we can credit the testimony of 16-year-old Gay Denver, a student who maintains that one day in 1968 he was quietly pushing his bike up the rise overlooking Glendarry Lake near Achill Sound when he came upon a most peculiar creature climbing a turf bank into the woods.

"It was moving in a jumpy way like a kangaroo," he breathlessly informed the authorities. "It has a long head like a sheep and a long neck and tail. The hind legs were bigger than the front ones."

IN 1975 and 1976 kangaroos returned to Illinois.

At 7:00 A.M. on Monday, July 14, 1975, Rosemary Hopwood was driving along Illinois Route 128 south of Dalton City. Suddenly she saw something which she first took to be a dog but as she got closer to it she discovered it was quite something else: a kangaroo strolling at the side of the road on all fours. As she watched, it moved across the road and sat up on its hind legs. Light beige in color, standing 2½ feet tall, it had pointed ears and a long thick tail. Presently it hopped off into a cornfield and was lost to sight. Three days later two other persons encountered it in the same general area.

On April 6, 1976, at 6:30 A.M. Harry Masterson of Rock Island spotted a similar creature while walking his dog.

"I looked across the street and there it was," he told Loren Coleman. "A kangaroo — and a big one. It came hopping through the yard. The kangaroo and I stood there looking at each other for about a minute. Then it turned around and went hopping away off to the north."

Masterson was sure it was a kangaroo. He told Coleman he had visited the Milwaukee Zoo and knew what a kangaroo looked like. Besides, he pointed out, there were other witnesses and they agreed it was a kangaroo.

Masterson dashed into the house and persuaded his wife Barbara and his mother-in-law to come outside and see the creature. As they emerged the kangaroo was already on its way, hopping "faster than a dog," according to Mrs. Masterson. The trio stood on the

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front lawn and watched the marsupial disappear into the sunrise.

Mrs. Masterson said that exactly one month to the day after their sighting an unnamed woman saw a kangaroo in Rock Island.

On August 12, 1976, a kangaroo was seen at 2:10 A.M. by a citizen's band radio operator near Golden, Colo. The radio operator's report was forwarded to police and five law enforcement officers attempted to track the creature down with some measure of success. At 4:15 A.M. one of the group, Patrolman Donald Douglas, spotted the kangaroo near some clay pits. He said the animal, which appeared to be full-grown, hopped away when he approached it.

And while that is the last known kangaroo sighting to date, it seems safe to say that somewhere in the American countryside a mystery kangaroo is just waiting to spring into action.

THE EDGE OF MADNESS

By W. Ritchie Benedict

A STANFORD University psychologist believes that a weird series of deaths nearly drove him crazy. Dr. Phillip Zimbardo told the 1977 meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association that he felt he was on the edge of madness after a series of fatal accidents occurred, involving people associated with his career.

"The starting point of madness is the perception of a discontinuity, an anomaly, something that doesn't make sense," he said, adding that his own example refutes the notion that insanity has physiological causes.

The trouble started when he was a graduate student at Yale University and three of his advisers died in quick succession. After he became a professor his student research assistant died in a car crash. Next a television technician was electrocuted while recording one of Zimbardo's experiments at a California prison. Two years later an entire television production team working on a project for Zimbardo were killed in a plane crash.

Soon after Zimbardo hired his father as an assistant, he died. "Then I transferred the royalty check for the work to my mother," Zimbardo said. "She died three months later. That's the story to date. You reach a point where you say there must be a correlation. I felt cursed."

Zimbardo's recovery came when he discovered that one of his colleagues felt responsible for similar deaths and thought that he too carried a curse. This led Zimbardo to take a deeper interest in the origins of insanity.

"When a person has an experience which deeply affects his mental peace, the first reaction is to search his memory for a similar past experience," he said, adding that if that fails, the next step may be "an external search mission. If I can find three other people who act the way I do, then it's not madness, it's a social movement."

All my life I feared Mother's supernatural abilities — and after her death she continued to give me unwelcome psychic guidance.

Mother was a medium

By Fred Winter

IN WARTIME England the German air raids were usually a surprise to everyone but our family. We lived on Stapley Road, Hove, in Sussex on the south coast and the enemy planes always flew right over us on their way to London and Coventry.

My mother, Olive Victoria, was a medium — old ladies for miles around would come and sit in our front room hoping to receive messages from their deceased loved ones — and many, many times during those years I saw my mother suddenly look up, then say, "Yes, all right; thank you for telling me." Afterwards she would say, "We will sleep in the air raid shelter tonight because we are in for a really bad one."

She was always correct and soon many other people began to ask her whether it would be safe to sleep in their beds that night.

I remember one Saturday afternoon in April 1940 particularly. Dad had taken Mom and me to the movies. This had entailed standing in a lineup for 45 minutes but it was supposed to be a good show so we didn't mind the wait. When at last we were inside, seated comfortably in the big plush chairs, with the movie soon to begin, Mother suddenly said, "We have to go; Grandma is very ill."

She was referring to her own mother and after much arguing on my part we left the theater. Dad looked as furious as I felt as we hailed down the taxi and gave the driver Grandmother's address.

Upon our arrival at the house one of my aunts answered the door looking very pale and worried. "I thought you would get here sooner," she said, not in the slightest bit surprised that we had come at all without phone call or written message.

The old lady had suffered a severe heart attack and looked quite blue as she lay in bed waiting for the doctor.

"My God," I thought, "we have even beat the doctor."

The old doctor held out no hope whatsoever for Grandma and told us so. Her advanced years counted heavily against her. "She will not last longer than a couple of hours at the most," he said, giving her an injection to ease the pain.

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million dollars. The pyramid will be covered with 23-carat gold leaf, just as Onan believes the Great Pyramid of Cheops was. Onan's pyramid is one-ninth the size of the Cheops pyramid.

Onan is a quiet, modest man, more intuitive than articulate. A successful businessman, he heads a construction company in Gurnee and has a number of real estate investments. Onan himself won't say how much he's worth but a relative who prefers to be identified only as Cousin Nick claims Onan is a millionaire 10 times over.

Onan is also a dreamer. He "knows" things, such as that the Great Pyramid was built 40,000 years ago (Egyptologists say 4500) and the people responsible for it were "different than us." They built the pyramid to protect themselves from something, perhaps to divert dangerous energies. These ancient Egyptians knew all the pyramid secrets and any modern pyramid, if it is to work properly, must be built to the same scale as that of the Great Pyramid.

Asked how he gets such information, Onan shrugs. It just comes to him. He doesn't read much but he thinks a lot. And he has the m[oney] with which to realize his dr[eams].

One of his dreams is to help [people]. A devout Catholic, he a[lready] good-sized chunk of his [annual] income to St. Joseph's Catho[lic] Church in Waukegan, where he was once an altar boy. The church runs a school, most of whose students now are poor and members of minority groups.

But with the pyramid house Onan can do a lot more. He can store hundreds of gallons of water in the structure, "energize" the liquid and give it to persons with health problems. With luck perhaps he can supply enough water for 10,000 persons a day. He intends to leave a part of the building open to guests who might be able to benefit from a stay inside.

If all this seems exotic, it isn't because there's anything particularly exotic about Jim Onan's life. He grew up in Waukegan, the youngest of four brothers, two of whom, John and Jerry, work with him in his construction business. His father worked at the American Steel & Wire factory in Waukegan and the Onans lived a quiet, comfortable, middle-class existence across the street from St. Joseph's, whose grade school the boys attended. In 1958 Jim started his business with little more than a wheelbarrow and a shovel. Through sh[eer] hard work he became, in due [course] multimillionaire.

Having lived his [all-]American s[uccess] story, Onan ma[y] up a mirror occult leger[d] [though] he [has] no interest i[n] the oc[cult] a[s such]. But the great py[ramid] of [Onan], already the fo[cus] of [much] attention, is going to bring [a lot] of people — health-seekers, the curious, the skeptical, the crazy — to his doorstep. Already Onan has put up an electric fence around the property and stocked it with guard dogs and security personnel. A man-made lake will surround the house. When the gold leaf is put on, Onan will move into the building to provide it with the additional security of his presence.

The pyramid has six floors. The first will serve as a four-car garage and also as a sort of laboratory in which Onan will keep plants and animals to test the effects of pyramid power on living things. The second floor will be a living area, the third a sleeping area.

Onan is reluctant to discuss what he plans to do with the fourth and fifth floors. All he will say is that they will be reserved for "experimentation" of various kinds.

The sixth floor, at the apex of [the] pyramid, is a "dangerous" [space] the energy is so intense, [Onan] lieves, that it is unsafe [to] but the shortest time [possible]. Still, he sees p[ossi]bilities [for] further experimen[tation]. He is especially intere[sted] in [mapping] the effects of pyra[mid] energ[y] from floor to floor.

He hop[es] he can get scientists and [others] interested in pyramid power, though right now he's too busy building his house to make any concerted effort in this direction. But when the time comes, he says he is willing to cooperate with any serious investigators who might want to do research inside the structure. He wants to talk with skeptics, too, to get their ideas and suggestions. One day he'll write a book about it all.

No, he doesn't think he's anybody special and he certainly doesn't want anyone to see him as a guru. "I've got my problems, too," he says. "How can I help anyone else with theirs?" If anybody gets helped, it won't be because of Onan's powers; it will be because of the pyramid's powers.

Nonetheless, says Cousin Nick, Jim Onan's most energetic booster, "He's being guided. By what we don't know. But something is guiding him."

That sort of talk makes Jim uncomfortable.

"Jim just gets ideas and he acts on them," Jerry Onan says. "I've seen it happen any number of times. When he starts looking at something, things start to happen. Things are set in motion when he gets intense.

"It isn't psychic. At least Jim doesn't think it is. It's just natural to him, instinct, intuition — call it anything you want. I suppose some people *would* call it psychic. But it's Jim. That's just the way he is."

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MORE KANGAROOS?

By Loren Coleman

DURING the summer of 1979 Canada was the target of some more mystery kangaroo visitations. (See "Kangaroos from Nowhere" by David Fideler and Loren Coleman, April 1978 Fate.)

Early in the morning of May 31 a police officer radioed his station to say he had sighted a kangaroo in Scarboro, a section of Toronto, Ontario. A Metro Zoo official, when asked for his opinion, said, "We're not missing any wallabies or any other kind of creature. It's likely just a rabbit with long ears."

A few days later and several hundred miles northeast, another kangaroo popped up. Roy Hanley, a guard at the Acadia Forest Products, Ltd., mill in Nelson-Miramichi, New Brunswick, saw a kangaroo at 3:00 A. M. on June 5, 1979.

"I was standing no more than 10 feet from him." Hanley said. "As far as I'm concerned it was a baby kangaroo. It had a long tail, big droopy ears and a grey-brown coat."

A taxi driver and her passenger also had seen a kangaroo near the mill and other encounters were reported from Millton and Douglasville, New Brunswick.